

Aputtaka Sutta 1

(Paṭhamâputtaka Sutta)

The First Discourse on the Childless

[Wealth is meant to be enjoyed]

(Sāmyutta Nikāya 3.19/1:89-91)

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Introduction

There are two Aputtaka Sutta—the **Aputtaka Sutta 1** (S 3.19) and the **Aputtaka Sutta 2** (S 3.20).¹ Both have an almost identical introduction (differing only in the seth householder’s wealth) [§3] but the main stories thereafter differ. At least two important and positive points emerge from the two suttas:

- (1) wealth has a practical value, but is useless if simply stored away;
- (2) the propensity and capacity to enjoy our wealth is the result of past good karma.

In both suttas, the Buddha’s admonitions centre around a seth householder² who dies heirless and intestate. As such, his wealth is forfeit to the crown.³

In the Aputtaka Sutta 1, the Buddha admonishes that wealth is for the benefit of family, friends and religious. “Family” here refers to the extended family, including “slaves, labourers and and workers,” that is, the whole household. While this represents the enjoyment of the *fruit* of our goodness, making offerings to “the recluses and brahmins,” that is, worthy and virtuous religious practitioners, is our spiritual investment of present welfare and future happiness [§4].

The foolish—here called “the false individual” (*asappurisa*)—does not enjoy his wealth at all, and loses everything in the end. The wise—here called “the true individual” (*sappurisa*)—not only enjoys his wealth and benefits others, but safeguards it from being seized by the authorities or thieves, from being destroyed by the elements, and from being wasted away from bad heirs.

The message here is that true wealth is not something you have, but what you really are, your being. You cannot *have* happiness; you can only *be* happy. And you cannot be happy *alone*, but be happy *for* them: this is a networking of positive beings truly happy with one another. **The Anaṇa (or Anna,nātha) Sutta** (A 4.62), for example, speaks of **the four joys of wealth**, namely:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|--|
| (1) the joy of ownership | the joy of having | (the result of diligence), |
| (2) the joy of enjoying | the joy of being | (the result of watchfulness), |
| (3) the joy of debtlessness | the joy of giving | (the result of balanced livelihood), and |
| (4) the joy of blamelessness | the joy to come | (spiritual friendship and spirituality). |
- (A 4.62/2:69-71) = SD 2.2

This teaching regarding wealth is given in more detail in such discourses as **the Dīgha,jānu Sutta** (A 8.54)⁴ and **the Sigāl’ovāda Sutta** (D 31).⁵

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¹ S 3.20/1:91-93 = SD 22.5.

² “Seth” (Skt *śreṣṭhī*, P *seṭṭhī*) is the modern Indian cognate, and an anglicized term found in OED. PED defines *seṭṭhī* as “foreman of a guild, treasurer, banker, ‘City man,’ wealthy merchant, V 1:15 f, 271 f, 2:110 f, 157, S 1:89 ...etc.” Seths were wealthy entrepreneurs and money lenders of northern India. They were originally guild masters, but in due course became private bankers, often playing decisive roles in public affairs. While a *gaha,pati* (“householder”) was simply a landed person, the *seṭṭhi,gahapati* (“seth householder”) was one who combined agriculture with accumulated capital, which was invested in business: U Chakravarti 1987:73-83, esp 77. Anātha,piṇḍika was the best known of Buddhist seths. See Madan Mohan Singh 1967:249-251. Cf status of the seth in modern urban Buddhism: see Piya Tan, *History of Buddhism* (2 Spread of Buddhism), 2005 §37

³ The tt for this is *escheat*: see §3n.

⁴ A 8.54/4:281-285 = SD 5.10.

⁵ D 31/3:180-193 = SD 4.1.

The First Discourse on the Childless

(S 3.19/1:89-91)

1 Originating in Sāvattḥī.

Pasenadi's escheat

2 Then rajah Pasenadi of Kosala in the middle of the day approached the Blessed One. Having approached the Blessed One, he saluted him and the sat down at one side.

Seated thus at one side, the Blessed One said this to rajah Pasenadi of Kosala:

“Now, maharajah, where have you come from in the middle of the day?”

3 “Bhante, a seth householder has died here in Sāvattḥī. He had no son; so after conveying his property into the royal palace⁶—80,000,000 pieces of gold, bhante, not [90] to speak of silver!⁷

And yet, bhante, the seth householder's meals were like this: he ate red rice along with sour gruel!⁸

His clothes were like this: he wore a three-piece hempen garment!⁹

His vehicle was like this: he went about in a little old cart rigged with a leaf awning!”¹⁰

The false person and his wealth

4 THE FALSE PERSON'S WEALTH. “So it is, maharajah! So it is, maharajah!

When a **false person** [an inferior person]¹¹ gains abundant wealth,

he	does not enjoy it nor is pleased with it;
his parents	do not enjoy it nor are pleased with it;
his wife and children	do not enjoy it nor are pleased with it;
his slaves, labourers and servants	do not enjoy it nor are pleased with it;
his friends and colleagues	do not enjoy it nor are pleased with it.

He places in the recluses and brahmins no offering, that which raises him upwards, heavenward, fruiting in happiness, conducive to the heavens.

Since his wealth is not being properly used,¹²

kings	take it away, or
thieves	take it away, ¹³ or
fire	burns it away, or
water	washes it away, or

⁶ In other words, he dies intestate, childless and heirless; hence, his property goes to the crown through escheat. In English feudal law, *escheat* is the falling back or reversion of lands to the lord of the fee (heritable estate) upon the failure of heirs capable of inheriting under the original grant; or, in our own times, the lapsing or reverting of land to the crown in England, or to the state in the US as original and ultimate proprietor by reason of failure of persons legally entitled to such land. It is a common law doctrine that operates to ensure that property is not left in limbo and ownerless.

⁷ *Asīti, bhante, sata, saḥassāni hiraññass'eva, ko pana vādo rūpiyassa.*

⁸ *Kaṇṇajakam bhujjati bilaṅga, dutiyam.* Comy explains *kaṇṇajaka* as rice with the red powder from the husk (*sakuṇḍaka, bhatta*) (SA 1:159; AA 2:241). It is a kind of gritty gruel made from broken grains of husked rice (incl the rice dust) (VA 580; DA 814; AA 4:179; DhA 4:77; J 1:228); almost always accompanied by *bilaṅga* (“sour gruel”) (J 1:228, 3:299; DhA 3:10; SnA 94; VvA 222). Cf V:RO 3:9.

⁹ *Sānam dhāreti ti, pakkha, vasaṇam.* The three-piece garment is made by sewing together three pieces of cloth (SA 1:159).

¹⁰ *Jajjara, rathakena yāti paṇṇa-c, chattakena dhārīyamānena.*

¹¹ *Asappurisa*, “a mean fellow, an unworthy person” (CPD). His qualities (*asappurisa, dhamma*) are listed in **Sappurisa S** (M 113/3:37-45) = SD 29.6.

¹² This passage on the 5 ways wealth is lost is stock: **M** 13.10/1:86, 14.19/92; **S** 139/1.41/1:32, 3.19.4/1:90 (×3), 91; **Nm** 1.4; **Nc**:VRI 238.

¹³ It is ironic (an example of wry humour) that both “kings” (*rājāno*) and “thieves” (*corā*) “take it away” (*haranti*). See S:RD 1:115 n5.

unloving heirs take it away.

Such being the case, maharajah, that wealth, not being properly used, goes to waste, not to enjoyment.

5 PARABLE OF THE USABLE WATER. Suppose, maharajah, in a place uninhabited by human beings,¹⁴ there is a lotus pond with clear, cool, sweet and clean water, with good shallows [fords], and delightful.

But no people were to take that water, nor drink it, nor bathe in it, nor use it for any purpose; even so, maharajah, that water, not being properly used, goes to waste, not to enjoyment.

Even so, maharajah, when an inferior person gains abundant wealth,

<i>he</i>	<i>does not enjoy it nor is pleased with it;</i>
<i>his parents</i>	<i>do not enjoy it nor are pleased with it;</i>
<i>his wife and children</i>	<i>do not enjoy it nor are pleased with it;</i>
<i>his slaves, labourers and servants</i>	<i>do not enjoy it nor are pleased with it;</i>
<i>his friends and colleagues</i>	<i>do not enjoy it nor are pleased with it.</i>

He places in the recluses and brahmins no offering, that which raises him upwards, heavenward, fruiting in happiness, conducive to the heavens.

Since his wealth is not being properly used,

<i>kings</i>	<i>take it away, or</i>
<i>thieves</i>	<i>take it away, or</i>
<i>fire</i>	<i>burns it away, or</i>
<i>water</i>	<i>washes it away, or</i>
<i>unloving heirs</i>	<i>take it away.</i>

Such being the case, maharajah, that wealth, not being properly used, goes to waste, not to enjoyment.

The true individual and his wealth

6 THE TRUE PERSON'S WEALTH. But, maharajah, when a **true person** [a superior person]¹⁵ gains abundant wealth,

<i>he</i>	<i>enjoys it and is pleased with it;</i>
<i>his parents</i>	<i>enjoy it and are pleased with it;</i>
<i>his wife and children</i>	<i>enjoy it and are pleased with it;</i>
<i>his slaves, labourers and servants</i>	<i>enjoy it and are pleased with it;</i>
<i>his friends and colleagues</i>	<i>enjoy it and are pleased with it.</i>

He places in the recluses and brahmins offerings, which raises him upwards, heavenward, fruiting in happiness, conducive to the heavens.

Since his wealth is being properly used,

<i>kings</i>	<i>do not take it away, or</i>
<i>thieves</i>	<i>do not [91] take it away, or</i>
<i>fire</i>	<i>does not burn it away, or</i>
<i>water</i>	<i>does not wash it away, or</i>
<i>unloving heirs</i>	<i>do not take it away.</i>

Such being the case, maharajah, that wealth, being properly used, is enjoyed, goes not to waste.

7 PARABLE OF THE UNUSABLE WATER. Suppose, maharajah, in a place uninhabited by human beings, there is a lotus pond with clear, cool, sweet and clean water, with good shallows [fords], and delightful.

And people were to take that water, or drink it, or bathe in it, or use it for any purpose; even so, maharajah, that water, being properly used, is enjoyed, goes not to waste.

Even so, maharajah, when true individual [a superior person] gains abundant wealth,

he enjoys it and is pleased with it;

¹⁴ “Uninhabited by humans,” *amanussa-t,thāne*, sometimes wrongly tr as “a place of non-humans.”

¹⁵ *Sappurisa*, a worthy person. His qualities (*sappurisa, dhamma*) are listed in **Sappurisa S** (M 113/3:37-45) = SD 29.6. On this true individual as a good worldling (*kalyāṇa puthujjana*), see **Dhammaññū S** (A 7.64) = SD 30.10 Intro (2.3).

his parents enjoy it and are pleased with it;
his wife and children enjoy it and are pleased with it;
his slaves, labourers and servants enjoy it and are pleased with it;
his friends and colleagues enjoy it and are pleased with it.

He places in the recluses and brahmins offerings, which raises him upwards, heavenward, fruiting in happiness, conducive to the heavens.

Since his wealth is being properly used,

kings do not take it away, or
thieves do not take it away, or
fire does not burn it away, or
water does not wash it away, or
unloving heirs do not take it away.

Such being the case, maharajah, that wealth, being properly used, is enjoyed, goes not to waste.

- 8a** *Amanussa-t,thāne udakam va sītam tad apeyyamānam parisosameti evam dhanam kāpuriso labhitvā n'ev'attanā bhuñjati no dadāti* Like cool water in a place free from man dries up without ever being drunk, so, an inferior person, having gained wealth, neither enjoys it himself nor does he give. 414
- 8b** *Dhīro ca viññū adhigamma bhoge so bhuñjati kicca,karo ca hoti so ñāti,saṅgham nisabho bharitvā anindito saggam upeti thānan ti* But when the steady and wise gains wealth, he enjoys himself and does his duties; he, the best of man, supports his circle of kin, free from blame, finds a place in heaven. 415

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